REMARKS

Claims 1-20, all the claims pending in the application, stand rejected on prior art grounds. Applicants respectfully traverse these rejections based on the following discussion.

I.   The Prior Art Rejections

Claims 1-20 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Simmons, et al. Software Project Planning Associate (SPPA) as evidenced by at least Simmons et al., Software Project Planning Associate (SPPA): A Knowledge-Based Approach for Dynamic Software Project Planning and Tracking (2000), hereinafter referred to as Simmons in view of Microsoft Project 2000 as evidenced by at least Pyron, et al., Using Microsoft Project 2000 – Special Eidtion (2000), hereinafter referred to as Pyron.

Independent claims 1, 8 and 15 are amended herein to clarify the distinguishing features of the present invention that are not taught or suggested by the cited prior art. Specifically, regarding independent claims 1, 8 and 15, neither Simmons nor Pyron teach or suggest the feature of "creating an encryption key for each one of said tasks, wherein said encryption key for each one of said tasks allows access by said appropriate resource to said data source and said at least one tool for a limited period of time." Furthermore, regarding independent claim 8, Simmons and Pyron also do not teach or suggest the feature that when a first task is prioritized as a prerequisite for a second task, the

"creation of said encryption key for said second task is gated until completion of said first task."

More specifically, Simmons discusses the "Software Project Planning Associate (SPPA)" that can be accessed over the web and used "to assist a software project manager with initializing a software project plan, improving refining/improving a plan, organizing, staffing, scheduling," etc. (see page 305, col. 1, para. 2). The SPPA uses tools, such as PAMPA, that can gather project information from any software development that can share directories over a network to a Microsoft windows client workstation, or PAMPA 2, that has the capability to operate from internet browsers. These tools can be used to monitor, measure, and calculate software project attributes, generate reports, etc. (see page 307, col. 1, para. 3). A subsystem (Planning Intelligent Agents) helps keep track of project status, for example, the agent may determine that an activity is completed if by determining the current status of the activity corresponds to a final milestone that is stored in the knowledge base (see page 309, col. 2).

Pyron discloses that Microsoft Project 2000 is a scheduling and management tool for project managers and, specifically, provides tools for putting together a project schedule, assigning responsibilities, etc. (see Introduction page 1 of 2).

Whereas, the present invention relates to project planning and monitoring project progress, but has features that go beyond the project planning features disclosed in either Simmons or Pyron. Namely, instead of simply providing tools that may be used by project managers for developing project plans, monitoring project progress, etc., the present invention, micromanages implementation of the design project plan through the

use of encryptions keys that integrate the project planner into the actual design tasks without the need of manual interventions (see paragraph [0036]). That is, the project planner receives information regarding each task that must be completed. This information includes an appropriate resource (i.e., the most appropriate designer for the task), the data source (i.e., the design data), at least one design tool (e.g., a specific design tool that is needed to complete the task) and the duration of the task (see paragraphs [0028-0029]). The tasks are prioritized and the project planner than creates a data structure for the tasks that includes this information and encrypted keys (see paragraph [0029]). Each key includes data, the designer's name, the start and end dates of the task and the tool to which the key provides access. However, if during the prioritizing, it is determined that a first task will gate a second task, an encryption key for the second task will not be created until after completion of the first task (see paragraphs [0029] and [0032]). If a task is completed during the time period allowed, the planner is updated and gated tasks are unlocked (i.e., encryption keys are created) (see paragraph [0032]). Once a task is unlocked, the designer can access the required data and tools. Thus, each encryption key allows an assigned designer with access to the specific design tool and data required to complete the task only during a limited period of time (see paragraphs [0021], [0030-0031], [0036]).

Regarding the feature in independent claims 1, 8 and 15 of "creating an encryption key for each one of said tasks, wherein said encryption key for each one of said tasks allows access by said appropriate resource to said data source and said at least one tool for a limited period of time," the Office Action admits that Simmons does not

teach controlling access to the project data or automatically notifying the resources of corresponding task responsibilities and associated due dates based on the project plan through the use of keys as claimed. However, the Office Action cites Pyron as teaching "controlling access to the (design) project data through the use of the (encryption) keys (logon, name/password, resource ID, etc.) assigned to the resources (logon; Figure 15.2, Chapter 15, Page 2 of 5) as well as automatically notifying the resources of corresponding task responsibilities and associated due dates based on the project plan through the use of keys (identifiers, nam/password, resource id, etc.; MS Project Central, Team Update; Chapter 15, Bullets 1-4, Page 4 of 7; Figure 15.3) in an analogous artof project management for the purposes of providing secure/controlled access to the project and facilitating project communication."

Figure 15.2 of Pyron and the associated text refer to the log on page for Microsoft Project Central which is a web-based work group feature of the project planner that allows project managers to communicate assignments, etc., and team members to submit timesheets, etc. Figure 15.3 of Pyron indicates that Microsoft Project Central is a secure workgroup application that allows the exchange of messages and information about the tasks, etc. Microsoft Project Central, therefore, allows secure communications between a project manager and team members to discuss project plans, progress etc. However, no where in Simmons or Pryon does it disclose the creation and use of encryption keys to limit access to the specific design tools and data necessary to complete a task and, specifically, to limit access to a specified designer for a specified period of time.

Furthermore, regarding the feature in independent claim 8, that provides that when a first task is prioritized as a prerequisite for a second task, the "creation of said encryption key for said second task is gated until completion of said first task," Simmons and Pyron may each teach prioritizing tasks. However, neither Simmons, nor Pyron teach or even suggest prohibiting access to the data and tools necessary to complete one task until the completion of another through the use of encryption keys.

Therefore, amended independent claims 1, 8 and 15 are patentable over the cited prior art. Further, dependent claims 2-7, 9-15 and 16-20 are similarly patentable, not only by virtue of their dependency from a patentable independent claim, but also by virtue of the additional features of the invention they define.

Moreover, the Applicants note that all claims are properly supported in the specification and accompanying drawings, and no new matter is being added. In view of the foregoing, the Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider and withdraw the rejections.

II.   Formal Matters and Conclusion

With respect to the rejections to the claims, the claims have been amended, above, to overcome these rejections. In view of the foregoing, the Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider and withdraw the rejections to the claims.

In view of the foregoing, Applicants submit that claims 1-20, all the claims presently pending in the application, are patentably distinct from the prior art of record

and are in condition for allowance. The Examiner is respectfully requested to pass the above application to issue at the earliest possible time.

Should the Examiner find the application to be other than in condition for allowance, the Examiner is requested to contact the undersigned at the local telephone number listed below to discuss any other changes deemed necessary. Please charge any deficiencies and credit any overpayments to Attorney's Deposit Account Number 09-0456.

Respectfully submitted,

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